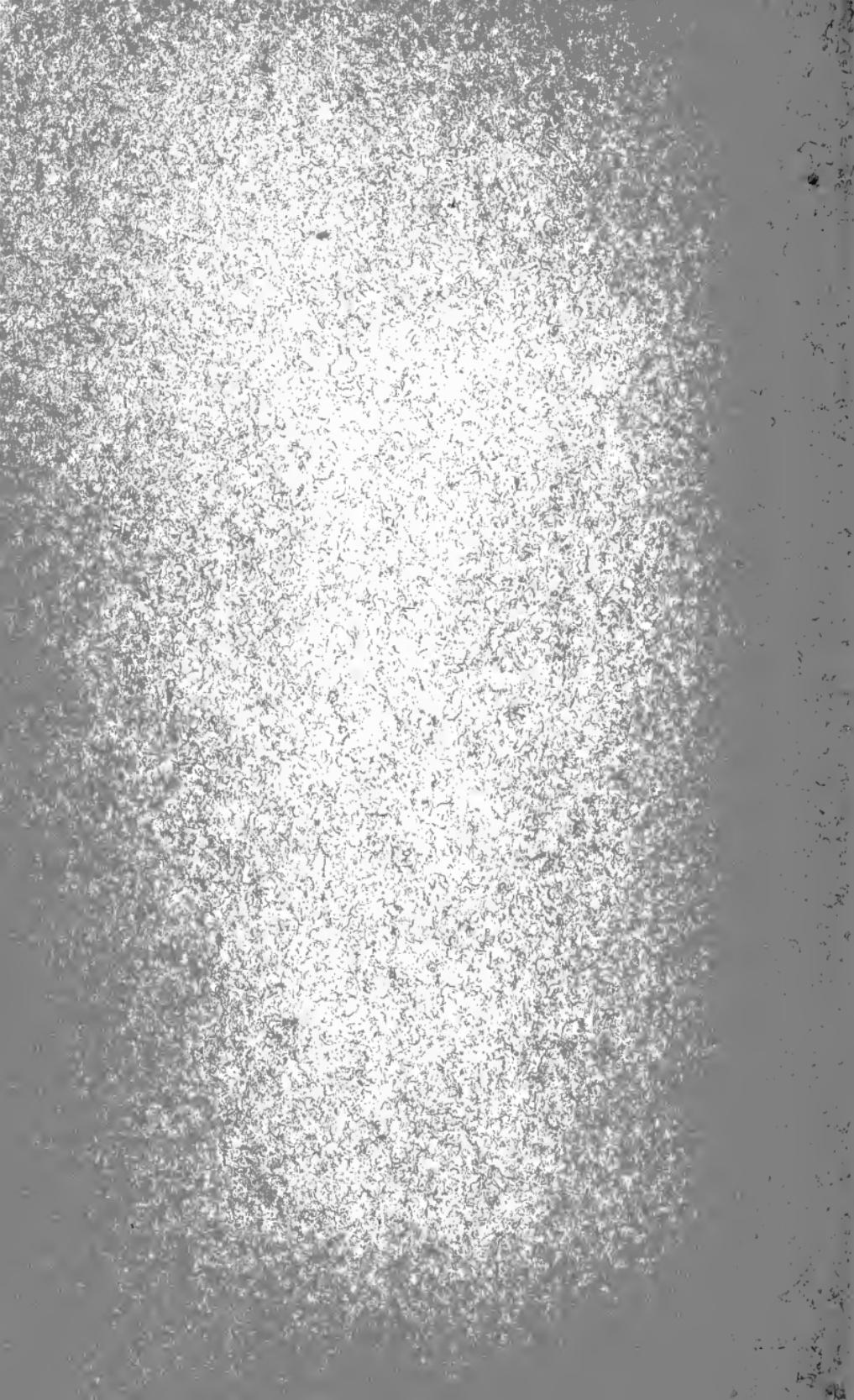


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Programs for Teachers' Conferences

Beginners' and Primary

HAZEL A. LEWIS



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BEGINNERS' AND PRIMARY

By

HAZEL A. LEWIS



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PROGRAMS FOR TEACHERS' CONFERENCES BEGINNERS' AND PRIMARY

Perhaps good conferences have been held from a sense of duty, but certainly they are never very thrilling! That "we-ought-to-have-regular-meetings" feeling does not usually result in conferences that stimulate and inspire those who attend, for so much depends upon the attitude of each person who is a part of the conference group. Earnest teachers may meet together week after week and faithfully consider their work, but unless there is real inspiration as well as discussion of new methods, the conferences will continue to be a matter of organization only.

Here are some of the ingredients of a helpful conference: a group of teachers (there may be three or thirty, the number matters not), a sense of need, confidence in each other and pleasant anticipation of the hours that may be spent together.

Quite naturally, the first thing to be thought of is a leader. There must be some one who will take the initiative in calling the first meeting or suggesting the matter to the proper person. How many groups of teachers there are who would be meeting together with enthusiasm and regularity if some one would just start! "Ah!" you say, "that is exactly our situation. There is no one to help us start such a

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conference." But that is quite easily answered. You who are now, this very minute, reading this paragraph are probably the very person to take the first step that will result in the establishment of regular and helpful conferences of the Beginners' and Primary teachers in your school. There! Do you remember how you used to feel when you were a child, playing a game, and found yourself chosen to be "it"?

Just how you proceed will depend upon local conditions. If it has been the custom to hold such conferences in the past, you will perhaps need only to let the leader know of these programs. Or perhaps it is a question of starting the work off with new interest in the fall. If you are the Primary superintendent you can yourself arrange for this first meeting.

Do not attempt to make this a large conference, and yet make sure that every one who should be included is in it. The more varied the personalities and problems, the more interesting the meetings will be. Probably there will be some new teachers who need suggestions and direction for their work; then there are those who have been teaching for some time and need to have their spirits renewed; there are the assistants, and perhaps some who are only considering entering one of these departments; there are substitute teachers; and perhaps you can also invite some who are not actually identified with the departments, but who can be of great help to the teachers, such as an artist, a musician, a story-teller, some one to represent the mothers' club or a similar organiza-

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tion. Such an "outsider" will help to give you new angles of approach, though of course it will be remembered that the chief aim of such a conference is to consider the work of the Beginners' and Primary Departments in your school.

FIRST PROGRAM

October

Theme: *Plans for Fortnightly Conferences*

This should be a pleasant social gathering and would be most happily arranged if a supper table were placed in the very room used by either the Beginners' or Primary Department on Sunday. There are two mental effects which will be accomplished — by gathering about a table at the evening meal there is a friendly spirit experienced by the members of the group, and by meeting in the department room for these conferences something of the atmosphere and experiences associated with it are brought vividly to mind.

We are very apt to say that such social gatherings cannot be arranged among our elementary workers, because they cannot be away at the supper hour; but a great wish to have at least one meeting like this will usually find a way. One obstacle seems to be that often the teachers and their helpers are from very different social and economic circles, but that only adds zest to the occasion. I shall not soon forget my arrival one rainy evening in a small town in

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Indiana, and the surprise that greeted me when I arrived at the church building where I was to meet a group of elementary teachers. Going directly from the train, at about six thirty, I found myself in a cheerful Primary room, where a long table with snowy linen was attractively set, and eight women were gathered about it. They were the Beginners' and Primary teachers of that church. Among their number was a stenographer who had come directly from her office, two girls who had come from the stores where they were clerks, a "stay-at-home" girl who was very prominent socially in the community, a young mother who had found it possible to slip away this one time, and another mother of mature years.

The table should be attractively arranged and at each plate, instead of the usual place-card, put an envelope, sealed and bearing upon the front a number and the words, "Not to be opened until after supper." On the front may be the name of the teacher and a picture representing a child about the age of those in her class. These may be cut from magazines and a touch of water-color adds to the appearance. When the supper hour is over, the leader may ask each one in turn to open her envelope and read what she finds there. The second person will not open hers until the first has been read and discussed. The number of these will of course depend upon the number in your conference; those which follow are merely suggestions. The paragraphs given below will be written upon cards or note-paper. Those in

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parentheses are not to be written, but are for the leader's guidance. Perhaps the leader will introduce this part of the program by saying, "This conference tonight has a theme — a very practical one: 'Some reasons why the Beginners' and Primary teachers in the ——— church should meet together for Fortnightly Conferences.' Each envelope contains a reason. We will read each one in order and discuss it."

The First Reason

Because our Johns and Marys as they grow up year by year are touched by the different teachers and helpers. Unless we understand each other we cannot understand the children.

(In discussing this informally the question may arise as to whether or not one person should continue to teach a certain group of children during their stay in these departments. This may offer an opportunity for emphasizing the fact that in the Beginners' Department only one year of the graded lessons is taught at a time, and thus the little child, who makes acquaintance slowly, has one teacher throughout the time he is in that department. In the Primary Department, where attendance at school has begun to make a difference in the children, the teacher may well specialize in one year or grade, and thus become thoroughly familiar with that period of development and that year's lessons. Conferences like this one will overcome any lack of unity between the different grades.)

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The Second Reason

Because in sharing our experiences we understand them better, as they are interpreted in the light of the experiences of others. Dr. Richard Cabot says, "Your best friend strikes thoughts and ideas out of you that you never knew were in you, and that truly were not fully formed in you until your friend woke them to life."

(If the one who reads this wishes to give any personal experience in connection with this, it will add interest and helpfulness.)

The Third Reason

While the work of each one of us is different and distinct from the others, yet they are part of a plan that must have life and unity, if each part is well done and the result is complete.

" You may take from out the sweetest song
 Just one note, the sweetest one;
You may sound it full and strong,
 But its music is all gone."

(Perhaps you will wish to talk over together the question of just how far a teacher should go in her own peculiar methods without consideration for the whole educational plan of the school.)

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The Fourth Reason

All of us touch life in a different way. We discover new truth and find new sources of helpfulness which we may bring to enrich the lives of others.

(Use this as an opportunity for emphasizing the fact that there is no one who has not some contribution to make to the common good.)

The Fifth Reason

If we do not understand each other perfectly we may sometimes seem not to be working in harmony. The children become conscious of this in a subtle way and their relation with the heavenly Father is marred if there is not unity among the persons about them.

(Discuss the ideas that children have of their teachers, the department superintendent, and the whole question of adult authority in these departments.)

The Sixth Reason

This is a beautiful one and is tucked away in a few paragraphs from the "Music Lover" found in Henry van Dyke's "The Unknown Quantity." In describing a great symphony orchestra he says, "It was a company of human beings, trained and disciplined to common action, understanding one another through the sharing of a certain technical knowledge, and bound together by unity of will which was expressed

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in their central obedience to the leader. . . . There was no labor, no dramatic display in that leadership; nothing to distract the attention, or to break the spell of the music. All the toil of art, the consideration of effect, the sharp and vehement assertion of authority lay beyond in the rehearsals."

(Follow the reading of this quotation by a simple prayer for guidance in finding that harmony of spirit and method that will make the teaching of religion as beautiful and as perfect in form as the greatest music of the world.)

The leader might suggest that every meeting of the Fortnightly Conference shall have for each teacher "something for the head, the hand and the heart," which will mean that there will be a new idea, a bit of material and inspiration that will quicken the pulse of her mental and spiritual life. As a demonstration of the last, give to each one in the conference a card upon which has been written this quotation: "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."—*Emerson*.

Ask each teacher to put this somewhere where she will see it frequently and let it be the thought with which she will go to her daily work and which will bring her to the next meeting of the conference.

The conference may be brought to a close by a discussion of future plans, arranging the dates and effecting a simple organization. Perhaps the permanent leader will be the Beginners' or Primary superintendent, but this is not absolutely necessary. It may be some other person who is well fitted for this place.

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These conferences are not times when the business of the department is to be transacted, but only the methods and spirit of the work are to be considered. It is better to have the business session conducted in connection with the regular Workers' Conference of the entire school, but if it is necessary to combine business with the work of this Fortnightly Conference, it of course will be best to have the regular superintendent of one of the departments act as presiding officer.

It may not be possible to have a social hour or supper at each of the conferences, and the local conditions will determine the time when they will be held.

SECOND PROGRAM

October

Theme: *New Pupils, their Friends and Teachers*

(The notes given under each heading are only suggestions. The various topics and other plans for the meeting should be treated very informally and naturally.)

I. Teacher's Hymn

“Open Mine Eyes that I May See,” or, “Break Thou the Bread of Life,” or it may be well to adopt a hymn to be used at the beginning of each conference,

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and the following would be very appropriate. It is sung to the tune "Autumn."

Up to me sweet childhood looketh,
Heart and mind and soul awake;
Teach me of thy ways, O Father,
Teach me for sweet childhood's sake.
In their young hearts soft and tender,
Guide my hands good seed to sow,
That its blossoming may praise thee,
Praise thee wheresoe'er they go.

Give to me a cheerful spirit,
That my little flock may see
It is good and pleasant service
To be ever taught of thee.
Father, order all my footsteps;
So direct my daily way
That in following me, the children
May not ever go astray.

Let thy holy counsel lead me,
Let thy light before me shine,
That they may not stumble over
Any word or deed of mine.
Draw us hand in hand to Jesus,
For his word's sake unforget,
"Let the little ones come to me,
And do thou forbid them not."

II Prayer

Let this be a very real and childlike petition to the heavenly Father, asking that we may know how to meet each child with whom we come in contact in our daily lives and in our work; that the words we speak and every act may be in accord with his will for the children.

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III Picture

Perhaps there is some one from whom you can borrow Sir Joshua Reynolds' picture, "The Age of Innocence." If you do not have a large copy of this picture secure the small size, for one or two cents, from one of various picture publishing houses. Mount these and have one for each teacher. It will be good for her to have this on her desk or in her room that she may see it often. After the hymn and prayer call attention to this picture and give a few moments to an appreciation of it. It is a little child whose heart is filled with wonder as she looks upon the great outdoor world. Her appearance speaks of the loving care of her mother. Probably she is shielded and protected from any influence that might harm her, and yet even now she is beginning to wonder about this great world in which she is living. What do you think she is thinking about? If a grown person came to her now, what should be the manner of approach? Do we give children sufficient opportunity for thinking alone and without the continual interpretation of adult ideas? All of the friends of children are their teachers, but sometimes the best teaching method is a wise withholding of one's self.

IV Introduction to the Theme

October is that month in the church-school year that has in it the most strangeness among children and teachers. There are the little children who have been coming occasionally and have been in the Cradle

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Roll class. Now they are beginning their regular attendance in the Beginners' Department. There are the timid little children who have not attended before, but who begin now to come with brothers and sisters or friends slightly older than themselves. Promotion time has made a change in classes and teachers, so that there must be a large amount of getting acquainted, which should be arranged with tact.

(Make this an analysis of the situation in your own school and the preparation for the discussion of certain questions which are to follow.)

V Discussion of Topics

(These topics must be given out in advance.)

1. How should new children be met and the first relations established?

(Bring out the difference between the approach to a timid child and one that is more easily approached, as well as the "forward" child. Call attention to the fact that we often ask a child his name without first telling him ours, with the result that children have attended the church school for weeks without knowing the name of their teacher. Emphasize the fact that after the informal greeting before the session, it is best to introduce the new child to several others and then leave them to get acquainted in their own way. Continue this discussion informally.)

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2. How should new pupils be enrolled?

(Discuss the method that can be used in your own school. The same plan cannot be used in all the different departments. Sometimes if a very little child is sent to the office or desk of the enrolling secretary of the whole school, he becomes frightened because he does not understand and his first contact with the school is not a happy one. Yet we must cooperate with the general officers of the school in securing an accurate enrollment. The one who has this topic may well have a conference with the secretary of the school and be prepared to advocate some workable plan at this time. Perhaps the enrollment may be made at the secretary's desk in the Beginners' and Primary Departments, and a duplicate card sent to the general officer of the school each time a new pupil is enrolled.)

3. Should younger children be allowed to remain with the older ones in their class?

(Develop the fact that a younger pupil will never become acquainted with his proper group as long as he goes into the older class. It is better to excuse the older children to go with one younger for a few Sundays, or until he becomes accustomed to his proper place. Sometimes we are lacking in tact in the way we approach these young children. One Beginners' Department has some very fascinating scrap-books, and when the teacher wishes to win a small child for her class, she tells of a picture, perhaps of "a little,

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wee baby in its crib." The timid child forgets himself and goes happily off to see this pleasing sight. Soon he is looking at other pictures and by the time he has finished the book he is attracted by something in the department and soon finds himself a part of it. (These scrap-books can be made by the older Primary pupils, working before the session or on a week day. The person who discusses this topic should have some substantial scrap-books made of heavy paper and a collection of pictures cut out ready to turn over to the second or third year Primary teachers, to serve as a suggestion for them.)

4. How may the former teacher of a child co-operate with his new teacher?

(Discuss the kind of information that can be passed on to the one who is to become the new teacher of a group of children. If the occasion is at all favorable, make this a time for asking and answering questions about the individual characteristics of certain pupils. This must be done in the most kindly spirit and all prejudice must be avoided. A teacher who has found the best way to approach a pupil should share that knowledge. This part of the discussion may be very helpful and practical.)

Other topics may suggest themselves to your particular group of teachers and time be spent in conversation concerning the problems of our department which are related to the theme for this meeting. The leader should direct this and there should be only one person speaking at a time.

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VI Poem

“ Six Years Old ”¹

Should I kiss him, or shake hands?
Tell me what his case demands.
Should my hungry arms inclose
His wee form; and should the rose
That he uses for a mouth
Meet my own? The jasmined South
Holds no balm so sweet as this
Nectar in my laddie's kiss!

Yet he's six brave summers old —
Calls himself a man, I'm told!
At my tiresome journey's end,
As my homeward way I wend,
Should I greet the babe of yore
As I greeted him before?
Or within his presence stand,
Gravely tendering my hand?

Neither baby, now, nor boy;
Spurning every childish toy,
Swaggering with mannish stride,
Hands in pockets, feet set wide,
Scorning as effeminate
Huggings at the garden gate!
On the border line he stands —
Shall I kiss him, or shake hands?

— *Strickland W. Gillilan.*

“ If all the wonders of this world should break suddenly . . . upon a full-fledged man, his mind would faint under it . . . yet something like it happens every day in a child's life.”

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THIRD PROGRAM

November

Theme: *The Children's Week-day Life*

I. Presentation of Theme

We are anxious that everything shall be provided for the teaching of the children while they are within the walls of the church, but sometimes we forget how much of this success depends upon what we know of the circumstances of the children's lives outside the church. The plans which we make so carefully from our point of view may create entirely different impressions when viewed from an angle of the daily experiences of the children themselves. Herbert Spencer said, "The vital knowledge which now underlies our whole existence is a knowledge which has got itself taught in nooks and corners; while the ordained agencies for teaching have been mumbling little else than dead formulas."

This seems a bit hard on schools and teachers, but let us try to see ourselves and our work in a new light. What do we know about these "nooks and corners" that have such a large share in the education of the children? Can we, in spite of our busy lives, find time to become acquainted with this week-day world of children under nine years of age? Sometimes we feel that the immediate tasks before us are all that we can perform. Yet these may be made easier and infinitely happier if we lift them out of the usual routine and see them in relation to the life of childhood.

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Our discussion of this every-day life will have two phases. First, we will obey the admonition of Froebel when he said, "Turn thine eyes observantly upon thy own youth, and warm and vivify the eternal youth of thy mind."

We will each relate the most vivid recollections of our own childhood, and try to remember, if we can, how we felt when we were children.

II. Reminiscences

These recollections are always nearer the surface of our thoughts than we realize. Let this be an informal conversation, with a mixture of fun and seriousness, including the memories of the early home life, mother, father, playmates, first days at school, visits, attendance at church, and the many things that go to make up childhood's days.

III. Discussion

The leader should direct a discussion of these reminiscences, perhaps by asking questions, such as, "Why did we remember these things and forget so many others?" "Which do we remember most vividly—persons or places, things that were said or things that were done?" "How may we live again our childhood experiences and thus gain sympathy with all children?" After this discussion emphasize the significance through the quotations which follow.

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These may be given out in advance or, quite as well, given at this time in the program to the teachers who are to read them.

IV. Quotations

1. In Maeterlinck's *The Bluebird* and the scene, "The Land of Memory," Granny Tyl says when the memories of the children's earlier years come flocking about them, "Here they are! As soon as you think of them, as soon as you speak of them, they are there!"
2. This is the way one young mother made many trips to the land of memory: "These," she said, touching an odd assortment of articles on the table before her, "are relics of my own childhood days—a snapshot of myself; a bit of a party dress; a cherished doll; a story-book. I have collected every memento I can find and each one calls up scene after scene. I have written to several friends and relatives, asking each to relate some little anecdote concerning the first five years of my life. Always I found that in the light of awakened memory I was able to understand my little daughter better and to deal with her more wisely and patiently." — Martina Gardner Owen, *The Golden Now*.
3. This is what James Whitcomb Riley said was the secret of his understanding of children: "There is always beside me the little boy I used to be, and I can think his thoughts, and live his hopes and his

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tragedies now, just as much as I could when I looked like him. We have great times together — this little boy and I — and we are never more intimate than when some other little child is near us. I have sat here by my fire, or by somebody else's fire, and have seen a little, strange child come into the room when it seemed as if he must know how much alike we were and that I must go and talk with him. But I never did go to him right away, or call him to me. Why? Because the little boy I used to be was at my elbow, and I remembered very well how he used to like to have people treat him. Was it the people who made an affectionate rush at him and caught him up and covered him with kisses who won his heart? No, it was the people whose hearts he thought he had won."

— *Harper's Monthly, December, 1917.*

4. *The Threshold*

Life lies before me, but shut is the door
On all my childish days. No more, no more
Shall I again in all my years be free
And careless — happy as I used to be.
So be it, Lord! I know that all is right,
I would not alter it, or shirk the fight.
Shut then the door! but leave a little crack
That when I meet a child I may slip back.

— Barbara Seymour, *Harper's Monthly, March, 1916.*

V. Prayer

In a few quiet moments and simple words express the gratitude you feel for the happiness of your own childhood and for the contact you now have with

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other children. Let us "become as little children" in our relation to the heavenly Father.

VI. Plans for the Next Meeting

The other phase of this theme will be practical observation of community life. Ask each teacher to come prepared to tell at the next meeting what she thinks it is necessary to know concerning the children's every-day life.

VII. Additional Reading

The following fascinating stories, founded upon actual experiences, will be very interesting reading in connection with the discussion which has just preceded:

Jeremy, Hugh Walpole.

Una Mary, Una Hunt.

VIII. Seasonal Plans

Since this is the season of Thanksgiving, the remainder of the time should be spent in discussing the stories, songs, activities and decorations that will mark the occasion. Special plans of this sort are always much more effective when the teachers and officers have a common understanding of what is to be done.

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FOURTH PROGRAM

November

Theme: *The Children's Week-day Life*

I. Observation

It is almost dangerous to discuss in a meeting like this the every-day lives of the children, lest we become theoretical and find ourselves trying to interpret the children in terms of our theories, instead of being constantly alert and ready to readjust our conclusions and methods to what we find in life. But even the great love and interest of a teacher must have direction, that the observations may be definite and the results understood and used. The questions which follow are only suggestions and the list may be modified or have additions in the light of the discussion. Copies of these questions should be prepared in advance for distribution at this time. Their purpose cannot be fulfilled in this brief meeting. They are to be used by the teachers as the basis of their observations in the weeks and months to come.

The Home

1. What is the attitude of the mother toward the children, as expressed in voice, manner, care?
2. Of the father and mother toward each other?
3. Between father and children?
4. What is the father's occupation? How much is he at home?

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5. Does the mother do all of the work of the home? What are her outside interests?
6. Are there other children in the home, or other persons in the home? Sex, age and relation?

The Community

7. At what age do the children begin to play outside the home?
8. Where do they play?
9. What playmates have they?
10. What are their relations to each other?
11. What do they play?
12. What changes are brought about by kindergarten and school?
13. With what grown people do they come in contact outside home and school?
14. What do they see? (Billboards, and other objects and activities of the neighborhood.)
15. What places of amusement are frequented by the family?

Make a list of a child's day, showing what he does, where he goes, and what he sees on a typical day.

II. Discussion

Each one in the conferences will be able to add something from her own unconscious observations

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that will illumine the discussion of these questions, but their chief value will be in the future use that each teacher and officer makes of the list. Care must be taken that these very personal matters of the children's lives are always discussed in a kindly spirit. It is easy for amusing and unusual situations to lead to a critical attitude. There must be perfect frankness, but this is entirely consistent with kindness.

III. Lessons

Recall a number of lessons from the Beginners' and Primary Courses, and see what connection there is between the facts of a child's life and the stories and conversation of the lesson period on Sunday. Look at this from the standpoint of the lesson interpretation rather than the application. This latter part of the subject will be taken up at another time. For example, consider Lesson 37, of the First Year Primary, Joseph's Kindness to His Brothers, and see how certain home situations would modify your method of presenting the lesson.

IV. Special Problems

There may be teachers who have problems in connection with certain children, which may be discussed at this time, and others in the conferences may have knowledge or contact which will help in solving the situation.

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V. Prayer

Simple and direct petitions that you may have wisdom with which to meet the opportunities that come through intimate contact with children.

VI. Seasonal Plans

The completion of such Thanksgiving plans and materials as are necessary at this time. Working together is in itself a valuable form of conference.

FIFTH PROGRAM

December

Theme: *The Christmas Spirit*

(*Note.* — It has seemed impracticable to plan two conferences for December, since everything that you would wish to discuss would need to come early in the month to permit carrying out your plans. A longer time than usual should be allowed for this meeting or, if it seems advisable, two meetings may be arranged for, thus keeping to the fortnightly plan. It should not be necessary to send a notice to the teachers reminding them of each meeting, but it might add interest to this occasion if a little booklet were sent, having a cover and an attractive Christmas seal on the front, and two tiny white pages inside, announcing the meeting and giving the special assignment for the person to whom it goes.)

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First Topic: What Christmas Meant to Me When I Was a Child

This should be assigned in advance to one teacher who will lead the discussion. Let the leader and the other teachers who participate in the discussion informally tell what they remember most vividly from the Christmas days and celebrations of their childhood. These may be recounted for the pure joy of the telling, and if this seems to be the case do not force a lesson in profound conclusions. If the circumstances seem favorable, try to discover in these experiences the relation between the material and the spiritual message of Christmas. What is there that you would have wished different and what that you would like to pass on undimmed to the children of today?

Second Topic: The Christmas Spirit of Today

The teacher to whom this topic is assigned will of course present it in her own way and from her own point of view. However, such questions as the following may be suggested to her or she may leave them open for the discussion which follows:

What has caused the change of emphasis from receiving to giving?

Are there dangers in this, and what are they?

What is the reaction upon the children in the case of conspicuous giving, such as the public presentation of gifts for the poor?

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How may we safeguard the spirit of Christmas from becoming lost in a wealth of material things?

It would be very interesting if the leader of this discussion would read "Christmas and the Spirit of Democracy" from *Beside the Christmas Fire*, by Samuel McChord Crothers. It is a whimsical but very interesting discussion of the modern Christmas spirit. This paragraph in conclusion may give us food for thought:

"It is a wonderful giving, this giving of one's self, and people do appreciate it. When you have ministered to a person's self-respect, you have given him something. And you are conscious of it, and so is he, though you both find it hard to express it in the old terms. All the old Christmas cheer is in these reciprocities of friendship that have lost *every touch of condescension*."

Third Topic: Children and the Christ-Child

In *A Child's Religion*, Mary A. Wilbur says, "I think that the stories of the Christ-child and the Saviour were taught me before I could remember. I seem to have had a protective and proprietary feeling for the baby Jesus, which changed with my growth, until it was Christ, the friend and elder brother, the helper who understood what I needed and wanted, that claimed my love and loyalty."

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Discuss in the light of your own experiences and your observation of the children who are your personal friends, such questions as the following:

What is the attitude of children toward the baby Jesus?

Do they think of him as a gift from the heavenly Father or as simply a dear little child whom they would have loved to see and touch?

Do they connect the baby Jesus with the man of later years?

Fourth Topic: Christmas in the Church-School Session

Is there danger that the unusual confusion and bustle at this time of the year will crowd out the things that are really important? Sometimes the annual Christmas service is held on Sunday morning and there is no department or class work done. Or, even when the service is held at another time, this Sunday nearest Christmas is given to "preparations," which may prepare for a public performance, but do very little toward the preparation of the child's heart for the coming of the Christ-child. Discuss the situation in your own school very frankly. It would be fine if you could all agree together that nothing shall interfere with the Christmas message reaching every child who comes to your church on that day.

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1. *The Christmas Lesson*

Would there be an advantage in having the entire department or the two departments together, for the Christmas lesson? Sometimes the children's minds are so full of unusual occurrences that it is hard to get a focus of attention. If only one thing were going on and every teacher and child were intent upon that one thing, would not the Christmas story have a better chance of appreciation and understanding?

Discuss this Christmas story, if possible having it told and criticized until its full beauty and meaning stand forth.

If the Christmas lessons are taught in the various classes, there may be an opportunity in the opening service of the Primary Department for another story to be told. The following are suggested:

The Jar of Rosemary, The Promise, *The Story Teller*, Maud Lindsay

His Birthday, Mary E. Chase

2. *Christmas Pictures*

If the Christmas story is to be told to the entire department or combined departments, it will probably be best to use some of the pictures from the Beginners' Course, since these are

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larger. It would be well to have at this meeting the four Christmas pictures which appear in the two years:

- “The Nativity,” Le Rolle
- “The Wise Men”
- “The Sistine Madonna” (detail), Raphael
- “The Adoration of the Wise Men,” Edelfelt

Discuss these pictures until your own appreciation of them is increased and deepened. If some art teacher is available and will help to interpret these pictures to you, it will be very helpful.

If you can do so, secure in addition to these, or to be used in place of the first picture above, a copy of “The Nativity” by Taylor (Copley Print, Boston). This is a modern painting of unusual beauty and naturalness. Children dearly love the tiny babe in the manger.

3. *Christmas Songs*

Sing together such songs as:

- “Why Do Bells at Christmas Ring?”
- “What Can I Give Him?”
- “The Christmas Manger Hymn.”

(*Songs for Little People*, by Danielson and Conant.)

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Fifth Topic: What Can the Children Do?

Primary children may use the pre-session period on Sunday or some hour on a week day for making scrapbooks to be presented to the Beginners' Department at Christmas time. A whole library of tiny scrapbooks, four by six inches, may be made of heavy paper, having such interesting titles and pictures as, "Pets," "Babies," "Animal Babies," "Day Time and Night," "Play Time." The pictures must be selected and classified in different envelopes by the teachers, who must also give directions in the making of these books.

A bird's Christmas tree may be placed in the church yard or a convenient place in the community, bearing bunches of suet and seeds of various kinds. Refer to the chapter on "Entertainment in Winter," in Ernest Harold Baynes' *Wild Bird Guests*. If this book is not obtainable, the following directions may be used: melt a quantity of beef or mutton suet, and stir into it such food as dry ground beef, hemp seed, oats, sunflower seed and bread crumbs. Pour this mixture boiling hot over the twigs and branches of some evergreen. The cold air will quickly set the fat. Of course a growing tree should not be used, but a small, cut tree, perhaps a discarded Christmas tree.

Simple Christmas greetings may be made for the Cradle Roll superintendent to send to the babies on her list. Small Christmas trees cut out of green paper may be prepared, and even Beginners can put Christmas seals on these. More elaborate greetings

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may be made by the Primary children for the Home Department members. Patterns are easily copied or made.

“ It wants a loving spirit
Much more than strength to prove
How many things a child may do
For others by his love.”

— *Kate Douglas Wiggin, Pinafore Palace.*

This quotation could be used in the department program, put upon the blackboard or repeated to the children.

Sixth Topic: Room Decorations

There is great danger that confusion and a mussу appearance will result from the usual frantic efforts at decorations. Let simplicity be the key-note of the plans that you make here and the results that are carried out in your room. If there is a frieze of burlap or a screen, as is sometimes the case around the Beginners' class, why not cut out of green cover paper a number of Christmas trees? These should be in size suitable to the proportions of your burlap and should be placed far enough apart to avoid a crowded effect. This, with the pictures you are to use, will be quite enough to create the environment and impression that you wish. Of course, nothing could be better than boughs of real evergreen and if you can have these, omit the border of cut-out trees.

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Seventh Topic: Something for the Children

Do the children of your community have a great many parties? If so, perhaps the only service which your school can give at this season is to bring the Christmas story in all its simplicity and beauty to them. But in the realm of childhood there is nearly always room for just one more party, and it would be well for you to discuss at this time the advisability of having a happy, informal gathering of the children of the Beginners' and Primary Departments (either together or separately) during the holiday season. Be careful that this does not become an entertainment given either for the children or by them for the amusement of adults. Let it be a real party in which the children actually participate. It is not necessary to seek for something new. The children themselves are new, and the old combination of simple Christmas trees or decorations, ice-cream and cookies, stories and games will never fail to delight the hearts of children.

SIXTH PROGRAM

January

Theme: *Measuring*

Note: The parts of this program should be assigned to different teachers and officers long enough in advance for them to get into the spirit of the theme. If the originality and enthusiasm of those who are to take part suggest other materials and lines of thought, do not hesitate to allow these expression.

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I. Introduction of Theme

The first of the year is the time for taking stock, measuring achievement and making new resolutions. Teachers and officers in our departments have been working together in their present relationships for a sufficient period of time to be able to look back and measure certain values. If Promotion Day was in the fall, there have been three months in which the teachers have had their present group of pupils, and each officer has been able to see her work in relation to the work of all the others. There have been two special days which have tested the organization and teaching methods.

Usually there comes a slight reaction after the holiday season, and it is very timely that we should sit down together and consider the weak places that need strengthening and the plans that should be changed. It is illuminating to see our needs and it is very encouraging to note the progress we have made. Sometimes this is so gradual that we can hardly observe it and we become discouraged.

II. A Voice from the Past

Hear this choice bit from the "National Series of Selections for Reading," published in 1852:

"I told you in the last lesson that I would teach you how to read the hard words that you may find in this or any other book. Now before you can understand them you must be able to read them; and in order that you may read them you must take the

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words to pieces; that is, take a few of the letters at a time, and see whether you can read a part of the word first, and then another part, until you have read the whole of it in parts, and then you can put the parts together, and thus read the whole word. In the next line you may read the parts of a word all separated:

“Ab ra ca dab ra. Now you have read the parts all separated, you can read them easily together so as to make one word, and the word is — Abracadabra. This long and hard word was the name of a false god that was worshiped many hundreds of years ago by a people who did not know the true God.”

Also this from the Introduction to the same book:

“Many little boys and girls are fond of running out of their places in school with a great many unnecessary questions. This always troubles the teacher, and prevents his going through with all his business in time to dismiss you at the usual hour.”

What description of a child's natural activity and curiosity is found in that first sentence! Pray tell, what is the “business” of the teacher but to answer a child's questions! What an aim for a teacher, to get through “in time to dismiss you at the usual hour”!

Educational ideas *are* improving and the work we do in our departments each week and year adds to this gradual growth.

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III. Measuring the Teachers

Let us begin with ourselves. Are we beginning to attain the qualities which have been set forth in the Elementary Standards for the Beginners' and Primary Departments?

“ Teachers qualified by nature, training and religious experience, that is, teachers who:

Possess a sympathetic understanding of child life.

Have a personality attractive and helpful to children.

Seek frequent contact with little children in their home, school and play life.

Are graduates or students in a Training Course, a Community Training School or a School of Principles and Methods.

Are continuing their specialized training in a Graded Union or by the reading of one specialization book a year.

Lead a sincere Christian life.”

(Discuss these points in detail. If the one who has charge of this part of the program wishes to do so, she may assign the six points to different persons, asking them to speak two minutes upon each point. Be practical and specific. Fine theories are valuable only when they are translated into life.)

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IV. A Standard for the Teacher

In addition to these general and very important qualifications, there are certain commonplace details which must not be overlooked. Would it not be a good plan for the teachers in our departments to agree to measure up to a certain standard of conduct and practice? (Discuss the following questions):

When should a teacher be counted on time? What should she do when she comes early?

Will the "Quarterly" give the teacher a complete lesson plan without any originality or rearrangement of material? Would it not be a help to make a few notes on each lesson, even though these are not used in the class?

What should be a child's attitude toward the Bible? What would be the effect, if, as she tells the lesson story each week, the teacher has the open Bible near at hand, occasionally reading a simple sentence from it?

What is the difference between a story that is told and one that is read?

What can reasonably be expected in the way of calling in the homes of the pupils?

Are we dedicating part of our reading time to our church-school work?

How can a visit in another church school be most valuable? What shall we look for in the work of other teachers and officers?

What opportunities for inspiration and instruction through institutes and other meetings are valuable?

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What is our relation to the rest of the school and how can we keep in touch with what they are doing?

What should be the attitude of a teacher of children toward the church services? If children are present with their parents or attend the services with the teacher, what impressions may they receive?

As a result of this discussion a standard similar to the following may be developed:

Present at least fifteen minutes before the Church-school session.

A written lesson-plan.

The Bible in the hands of the teacher.

The story told and not read.

Call upon pupils at least once each quarter.

Read at least one book concerning the work, each year.

Visit and observe one other Sunday school during the year.

Attend a Teacher-training Class, Institute or School of Methods.

Attend the Workers' Conference.

Attend the church services regularly and reverently.

V. Materials for the Department

At this time discuss the winter songs, which should be included in the program during this month. Become familiar with these. The following from *Songs for Little People* are appropriate: "In Winter" (for Beginners); "Winter Hymn" (for Primary).

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Ask some teacher to be responsible for bringing to the meeting such seasonable pictures as would be suitable in the room or in connection with the teaching period. Snow scenes, winter birds, home comforts and other pictures are to be found in current magazines.

SEVENTH PROGRAM

January

Theme: *The Joy of Knowing How*

Up to the point of efficiency, when one is learning a trade or profession there is comparatively little joyousness in his labor; but with the consciousness of mastery, of thorough knowledge and aptness, comes a feeling of strength and self-satisfaction, of superiority, which takes away all sense of drudgery and makes the pursuit of one's occupation a source of constant delight. — *William Matthews.*

I. Presentation of Theme

At the last meeting we measured ourselves and discussed our qualifications and our duties. We should also be able to know, in part at least, whether or not we are succeeding in our work. We must know what we are trying to do and whether or not we have done it. The standards for Beginners' and Primary Departments provide us with an excellent outline to guide us in testing our work.

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II. Testing Results

(The Beginners' and Primary Standards should be presented by different persons, and if it is thought best, the various sub-topics may be assigned to the teachers for discussion.)

Beginners

Are the children growing in:

Love, trust and reverence for God? (Indicated by their manner in speaking of him and in their attitude both in the church school and outside.)

Association of the heavenly Father with daily life? (This will be expressed in informal conversation before and during the session.)

Right behavior? (Shown in their attitude toward other children in their department and in their daily conduct.)

Love for God through prayer, praise and effort to please him? (It is not difficult to know by the manner in which children respond to song and prayer whether or not they are really entering into the spirit of them. Are details of program, seating, care of maps and ventilation so cared for that good order and reverence prevail?)

Love for others through acts of helpfulness? (This can easily be ascertained through your own observation and from what the mothers of the children will tell you. Do the mothers report growing habits of good behavior?)

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Primary

(Consider the Primary Standard in the same way, noting the differences between the two and discussing the points in their practical aspects as indicated by the questions given above.)

“ The conduct of the Primary child may manifest: Love, trust, reverence and obedience to God the Father and Jesus Christ the Saviour. Recognition of the heavenly Father in daily life. Love for God through worship. Love and reverence for God’s Book, God’s Day and God’s House. Increasing power to act in response to ever enlarging ideas of what is right and desirable. Increasing spirit of obedience and helpfulness. Increasing power to give love and forget self in social relations.”

III. Testing Our Methods

1. Have we a room or space that is
Clean
Light
Well-ventilated
Attractive in color and decoration
Childlike
That has good seating arrangement
Place for maps
Or if not, how can we improve conditions?

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2. Have we suitable and sufficient teaching materials?

 Pictures

 Objects

 Blackboards

 Music

 Helps for teachers

3. Do we provide opportunities for self-expression through:

 Worship

 Offerings

 Conversation and retelling of stories

 Handwork

 Helpfulness within the department?

EIGHTH PROGRAM

February

Theme: *Special Days*

I. A Prayer (offered by the Welsh bards in the morning before Eisteddfod, as they are seated in a circle on the highest hill. Copies of this may be written upon cards and given the teachers.)

“Grant, O God, thy protection,
And in protection, strength;
And in strength, understanding;
And in understanding, knowledge;
And in knowledge, the knowledge of justice;
And in the knowledge of justice, the love of it;
And in the love of all existence, the love of God — God and all
goodness.”

— *Gallant Little Wales*, Jeanette Marks.¹

¹ Used by permission. Houghton, Mifflin Co., 4 Park St., Boston, Mass.

II. Introduction of Topic

There are certain days in the year that have special significance for us. Some of these are personal and recall to us persons and places and past happenings. Some of them are days which have meaning for all of us and these are the festival days of the year. Certain ideas grow up about them, and our love, patriotism and spirituality are quickened and deepened by the recurrence of these days. They have a significance for the children, too, perhaps for them most of all, and our relation to these occasions becomes a twofold one, including our appreciation and the interpretation of them to the children whom we teach.

III. Questions for Discussion

These questions should be assigned in advance. The meeting will probably be more spontaneous and interesting if each one who is to lead a portion of the discussion presents it in her own way, without attempting to closely coordinate the subjects.

1. What special days during the year affect a child's week-day interest only? Which of them arouse the greatest enthusiasm? How is unselfishness cultivated through these experiences, or where lies the danger of self-seeking?

2. Which of these special days should be included in our church-school plans? What should be the degree of importance given to each of these? May

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some be simply referred to and others emphasized in our programs?

3. What special days come in February? (These, of course, will include Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays and Valentine's day.)

Which of these looms largest in a child's eyes?

What moral teaching is included in the celebration of these two great birthdays? If the Beginners' children do not attend kindergarten, it will probably be true that these two figures in American history mean little to them, unless they have older brothers and sisters in school and absorb their ideas.

Is the idea of patriotism the one most connected with these great characters, or are there other lessons of honesty, faithfulness and courage?

What opportunities for unselfishness, kindness and thoughtfulness are offered through the activities that Valentine's day always brings into the lives of the children?

4. Which of these days shall we make a part of our department programs for February, and how shall we do it?

Perhaps we shall wish to be patriotic in the Beginners' Department, with the flag much in evidence as we say:

"For God and home and native land,
Each little child may bravely stand."¹

The story, "Little George Washington," in *The Story Hour*, by Wiggins and Smith, may be told in the department program this month.

¹ From "Beginners' Department," Angelina Wray.

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Or, perhaps we shall wish to emphasize the love and thoughtfulness of the valentines which the children receive and give. How natural to sing, —

“ God is love, God is love,
Love one another, God is love.”¹

5. What decorations shall we have for this month? Let us remember the great danger of having too much, and practice “artistic reserve.” It certainly will not be a good idea to have the grave faces of Washington and Lincoln looking out from a galaxy of gay valentines.

If we are going to give special thought to the former celebrations, the flag, which should be in every department room, will be quite decoration enough, with a good print of each of these men. These prints may be obtained in large size for a very moderate sum from the Perry Picture Co., Malden, Mass.

If valentines are to enter into our religious education (and who dare say that they shall not?) a simple border of hearts cut from colored paper may be placed somewhere in the room.

6. Something to do. The children who come early may prepare very simple but attractive valentines to be sent to the members of the Home Department or to the Cradle Roll children. Perhaps the Primary children can make valentines for those in the Beginners' Department. If anything so elaborate is to be attempted, it is best to have a story hour during the week in connection with which this work can be done.

¹ “Songs for Little People,” Danielson and Conant

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NINTH PROGRAM

February

Theme: *Problems of Attendance*

I. A Quotation

What we want, to speak plainly, is to feel that God knows what happens to us, and is with us while it happens, and loves us steadily and tenderly through it all. — *Henry van Dyke*.

II. First Problem (stated by the leader)

How may we cause the children and their parents to share our desire that every child shall be in the church school every Sunday?

Aspects of this Problem

1. Does the marking of a class record book which the child cannot see, nor would understand if he could see, develop his desire to have a good record in attendance?
2. What is fundamental to his regularity of attendance? How may we make him feel that he is personally missed when he is absent? Do attractive designs in attendance records help in this matter? Should these be in the form of class records, such as posters, or should they be individual in form, so that each child feels that it is his own personal record that he may take home at the end of the month or quarter? Discuss designs of this sort, such as a use of hearts in February, daffodils in March, and butterflies in April.

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3. What may be done in the program to develop or cultivate regularity in attendance? In one Primary Department where the attendance had been very low on a rainy Sunday, a child who had been present on that day was asked to tell on the following Sunday the difference between Sunday and week-day for some people. He said something like this, "On a week-day when you wake up in the morning and it's raining, you put on your overshoes and raincoat and take an umbrella and go to school, but when it's raining on Sunday, some folks say, 'Dear me! it's raining, so I can't go to Sunday school.' "

In this same connection it might be suggested that on a rainy day some special privilege or pleasure be given, an unusually interesting story or a game in keeping with the day and the place.

4. How shall we go about looking up absent pupils? Discuss this in a very definite and practical way. The conditions prevailing among your teachers will control this to some extent. If the teachers are employed throughout the week and have little time at their own disposal, it would be well to arrange for the secretary of the department to send out cards or notes the first time that a child is absent. These may be obtained from a publisher or they may be personal notes written upon small and attractive note-paper. After a child is absent the second Sunday, the teacher should get in personal touch with the home through the telephone or a call. If this does not seem to solve the problem, the department superintendent should call. Sometimes it is necessary to report the details

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of the case to some other person, the pastor or a committee of the Woman's Bible Class, or any person who is in close personal touch with the homes of the community.

III. Second Problem (stated by the leader)

What is our relation to the child who is unavoidably kept from attendance at the church school for a long or short period of time?

Questions for Discussion

1. Should we not take more seriously the connection between the home and church school by sending to each child his paper which contains the lesson on the Sunday that he is absent? Perhaps a note to the mother should accompany this until the point of contact is firmly established. If the mother and the child alike feel that it is important for him to have every story, will it not improve the attitude toward religious education?

2. If a child is absent for a period of time, through illness or absence from the city, should not we see that the papers for that period of time are either mailed weekly or sent out all together? A call from the teacher at least once during that period, or a letter each week in case of a contagious disease, will deepen the sense of relationship.

3. Who should attend to the sending out of these papers, the secretary or the teachers?

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Right-at-Hand Problems

The leader of the conference should have a list of these carefully outlined in as logical order as possible and ready for discussion. These may consist of such items, interpreted locally of course, as the following:

Individual children

New program material (songs, etc.)

Order and reverence

Lesson problems

TENTH PROGRAM

March

Theme: *Books and the Teacher*

Preparation for the Meeting

It will be necessary to secure the books given in the list which follows, and have them in the meeting. If there is a church-school library, or a public library is available and these books are to be found there, ascertain this fact and make arrangements to have the books taken out by members of the conference in time for the meeting. Since these books are very closely specialized in title and contents, it is quite likely they will not be found in the public library. It would be better, in any event, to own them, so that they may always be obtainable for reading and reference. The entire seven will cost little more than five dollars.

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The various topics and work should be carefully assigned in advance. They are to be treated as those to whom they are assigned choose, but suggestions are given as to the trend of the discussion.

Suggested List of Books

1. *Child Nature and Child Nurture*, St. John
2. *The American Child*, McCracken
3. *The Child's Religion*, Wilbur
4. *The Study of a Little Child*, Whitley
5. *Methods with Beginners*, Danielson
6. *Story-telling for Beginners and Primary Teachers*, Cather
7. *Methods for Primary Teachers*, Lewis

Program

I. Presentation of Theme.

II. Prayer

By the leader, thanking the heavenly Father for the pleasant work he has given into your hands, for the companionship of little children and the fellowship with other teachers.

III. Quotations

These may be read by different persons, and commented upon in a conversational way.

Books must follow sciences, and not sciences books.
— Bacon.

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The true university of these days is a collection of books. — *Carlyle*.

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom;

Yea, with all thy getting get understanding. — *Proverbs 4 : 7.*

(*Note.* All of the above quotations are on golden tablets in the halls of the Library of Congress in Washington.)

Who, without books, essays to learn
Draws water in a leaky urn.

— *Austin Dobson.*

To discuss favorite books with congenial associates is one of the greatest pleasures of life, as well as one of the best tests of knowledge. — *George Hamlin Fitch.*

IV. Topics

1. *What books have meant to me*

This must be a personal account of the place that books have had in the life of the one who gives it. Bring out the idea that in all good books there is something that relates to the work of teaching, if only by enriching the mind. The work of teaching little children is not detached from the rest of life's experiences. Everything that broadens our knowledge and sympathy makes us better fitted for our work, whether we use the particular matter or not. It will be well also to mention the fact that it is very

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easy for us to say we have no time for reading, when what we really mean is that we do not have a large amount of time and do not think it worth while to use the little we have. Even a few minutes a day, wisely spent, lifts us out of ourselves and gives us the background we need for our own thinking and observation.

Open discussion.

2. *How to read*

Such ideas as the following phrases suggest may be presented: leisurely, without a sense of haste; pleasant anticipation, not a sense of duty; thinking, comparing, as one reads; marking passages of special interest, by underscoring and by marginal notes; taking time to look up references or unfamiliar expressions and words.

Open discussion.

3. *What to read*

(1) All good books that reveal life: fiction, essays and accounts of the world's affairs; (2) books that reveal child life, such as *The Very Small Person*, by Donnell, *Una Mary*, by Hunt, *Jeremy*, by Hugh Walpole, *Emmy Lou*, by Martin, *Anne of Green Gables*, by Montgomery; (3) books of child study, such as items 1, 2 and 3 in the list given at the beginning of the plans for this meeting; (4) books of methods, to be first read because of their interest and then kept at hand for reference, such as items 4-7 in the list just mentioned.

It will be seen that this list includes books of two general classes: those that apply indirectly to our

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work and those that apply directly. The value of both depends upon how we read and use them.

Open discussion, each member of the conference group adding the names of books she has found helpful.

4. *Other reading*

(1) The magazines have every month very helpful articles that teachers of children should read. Give a brief list of these.

An excellent plan is to cut out these articles and bind each one separately in a folder of cover paper about 6 by 10 inches in size, and using brass paper fasteners. A very interesting and timely "circulating library" may be accumulated in this way, and helpful material for future programs may be preserved.

(2) Selected chapters or sections in books of a general nature very often contain messages that are *unusual* and provoke new and original thought, for example: the essay "Child's Play," in *Virginibus Puerisque*, by Robert Louis Stevenson, and "The Ignominy of Being Grown Up," in *By the Christmas Fire*, by Samuel McCord Crothers. These are particularly refreshing, and will be found in nearly every public library and in many private ones.

(3) The Children's Bureau, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C., issues bulletins and other publications of great interest, including the findings of important conferences and the results of investigations. The work of the Children's Year is

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classified and well written up in a volume entitled *Standards of Child Welfare*. At least one copy of this should be included among the books belonging to your conference group. Nearly all of these bulletins are sent free upon application. Most of them are particularly helpful to mothers, dealing with the care of children's bodies, questions of nourishment and kindred topics. They are excellent for use in mothers' meetings, in calling and in other ways.

Discussion.

V. Assignments for the Next Meeting

1. Chapter V in "A Child's Religion," by Wilbur (see item 3 in the list at the beginning). This chapter is entitled "The Child and His Book," and should be assigned to one person to be reviewed and presented for discussion at the next meeting.

2. Chapter V in "The American Child" by McCracken (see item 2 in list). This is entitled "The Child in the Library," and should be assigned in the same way as the other chapter.

3. Appointment of a library committee to ascertain what is available in your own community.

4. Observation of children's attitude toward books, reading and being read to. Discoveries to be reported at the next meeting.

VI. Discussion

Problems relating to the departments and classes in your school.

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ELEVENTH PROGRAM

March

Theme: Books and the Children.

I. Quotations from "The Child's Garden of Verses"

1. All the pretty things put by,
Wait upon the children's eye,
Sheep and shepherds, trees and crooks,
In the picture story-books.

We may see how all things are
Seas and cities, near and far,
And the flying fairies' looks,
In the picture story-books.

How am I to sing your praise,
Happy chimney-corner days,
Sitting safe in nursery nooks,
Reading picture story-books?

— *Picture-Books in Winter.*¹

2. There, in the night, where none can spy,
All in my hunter's camp I lie,
And play at books that I have read
Till it is time to go to bed.

— *The Land of Story-Books.*²

II. Reading

Have you ever stopped to think how much time we spend in planning what we shall put on and in our children's bodies and how little in planning what we shall put in their minds? They go to school, to be sure, but that is for only five hours a day for approximately one hundred and eighty-five days in the year. What of the years before they begin to go to school, what of the hours and days each year in which they

¹Used by permission. Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 Fifth Ave., New York.

²*Ibid.*

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are not under instruction? Have we any deliberate plan to care for the mind's growth as we care for the body's?

It is just as important that children shall read good books as it is that they shall learn to read at all. It would be hard to find any one who would declare that it is unnecessary for children to learn to read. Yet reading in itself is not the end we seek, but only a means to that end. The goal of all education is the enrichment of life, and a child's reading carefully guided will deepen and strengthen his future ability to make the most of himself and his opportunities.

To really love books so that they may be woven into the warp and woof of his life a child should have his own individual library, which grows year by year with his growth, yet which contains friends to whom he will return time and time again, secure in the knowledge of a happy companionship full of pleasant association. A large number of books is not essential to have, but a few should be added each year and the standard of choice should be kept high. — *Seattle Public Library Bulletin*.

Discussion.

III. Presentation of "The Child and His Book"

See assignment in preceding program. This should be given informally, but should develop the following ideas:

1. The history of the book, as shown in the pictures by Alexander.

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2. Books in the present age.
3. What books mean to children.
4. The two tests for a child's book.
5. What is he keen in discovering?
6. What about words he cannot understand?
7. Does what the author says about church-school libraries apply in your community?
8. How may we cooperate with the home in the matter of the children's reading?

Discussion.

IV. Presentation of "The Child in the Library"

See assignment in preceding program. This charming study will probably bring out something of the following:

1. Influencing the children's reading.
2. The "finding out" habit, and how children use it in relation to books. (Be sure to tell the charming "red-bird" story.)
3. What children, even young ones, may find in a public library.
4. What publishers are doing.
5. The adaptation in children's books of the great literature of the world.
6. Reading as a bond between children and grown-up people.

Discussion.

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V. Report on Observations of Children and the Books they like

See assignment in preceding program. Perhaps you will discuss questions such as these:

1. Is there a place for the story that is *read* as well as the one which is *told*?
2. What books do children like, and why?
3. Why does a little child like to have a book that is his very own, even before he can read? Did you ever know such a one who could "read" every word in a book he loved?
4. What effect have books that are read or known through their pictures, upon the play and other conduct of children?
5. What value is there for the teacher in reading children's books?

VI. Report

Of the committee to investigate available books and magazine articles in the public library or other sources.

VII. Exchange of Books

Also plans for future reading.

VIII. Miscellaneous Business

TWELFTH PROGRAM

April

Theme: Easter Plans

We have come to observe certain special days in the year in rather set ways, without always having

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due regard for their real value and significance. Customs and practices have grown up around them and these often obscure the truth rather than reveal it. Sometimes there seems to be a plausible connection, as the giving at Christmas and the stories associated with the occasion; or the feasting and rejoicing at Thanksgiving time. But it must be confessed there seems to be little connection between the rabbits, chickens and other creatures that gather so gaily at Easter time. In what way should the church interpret Easter to the children? Perhaps we should first ask, "What does Easter mean to me?"

(The foregoing statement may be used as the basis for the short talk in which the leader of the conference will introduce the theme of the meeting.)

I. A Story for Teachers

"The Handful of Clay," from *The Blue Flower*, by Henry van Dyke. This is not a story for children, at least not without great modification, but it is a fine one for teachers and has in it the idea of suffering for the sake of rendering acceptable service. This story should be told for the inspiration of the teachers.

II. Topics for Discussion

What does Easter mean to the children? (Be perfectly frank in discussing the things which really loom the largest in the children's minds at this time.)

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What shall be our attitude toward their enthusiasm concerning the Easter eggs, baskets, rabbits, etc.?

What is there in the world of nature that will help us to interpret the message of Easter?

How may these ideas be brought to the children? (Discuss the matter of decoration of the room, the circle talk in the Beginners' class, the informal conversation with the Primary children and other opportunities for impression.)

III. Pictures

Have some teacher appointed in advance to get from the current magazine covers, from her own files of pictures and those of the other teachers, such pictures as will be suitable for use in the room or in connection with the lesson. If these are neatly mounted and presented at this time, their use can be discussed.

IV. The Easter Story

Have some one tell the Easter story suitable for Beginners, and another that which would be told to the Primary children. Lesson 26 or 27 usually contains the Easter story, although it is necessary to readjust this according to the date each year. The following are the topics and Scripture given in the International Graded Lesson Series:

Beginners, First or Second Year

Jesus and the Heavenly Home

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Story material: John 14: 1-3; Revelation 21:1-4; 22:1-5

Primary, First Year

Jesus Going to the Heavenly Home

Story material: John 19 : 30, 41, 42; 20 : 1-18; Luke 24 : 50, 51

Memory verse: Behold, I am alive for evermore.
— Revelation 1 : 18

Primary, Second Year

Jesus Dying and Living Again

Story material: Mark 15 : 1, 25, 37, 43-47; 16 : 1-8.

Memory verse: Because I live, ye shall live also. — John 14 : 19

Primary, Third Year

The Resurrection Day

Story material: Mark 16 : 1-7; John 20 : 11-18; Matthew 28 : 5-10; Luke 24 : 13-31, 34-40; 1 Corinthians 15 : 5

Memory verse: Ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who hath been crucified: he is risen. — Mark 16 : 6

Discuss the possibility of having the entire Primary Department together on Easter Sunday. Sometimes when all of the classes will be having stories very similar and when you wish to create an atmosphere particularly reverent and favorable for the story, it is a very good plan to have it told by one person. You can plan to have the classes in their separate groups long enough to have their records marked or for other customary matters.

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A simple, well told story, omitting the things which the children cannot understand, will make the Easter message very real to all the children. They have heard of Jesus, the little baby who came from the heavenly Father, and of the kind Friend that he grew up to be, helping people who were sick or in need. They will enjoy hearing how finally he went back to the heavenly home.

V. Prayer

That the reality of the living Jesus may come into your mind and spirit and that Easter may enrich your life so that you in turn can lead little children to their Friend and Saviour.

VI. Easter Songs

Learn and sing together one or two Easter songs, such as "Easter Song" or "Children's Easter Praise," the latter a very simple song for Beginners, and both found in *Songs for Little People*.

VII. An Easter Gift

Plan to send from the department a beautiful flower, preferably a growing plant, to some one whom the children know. Perhaps this flower may be in the front of the department room during the session and then sent to some hospital or an old lady in the congregation.

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THIRTEENTH PROGRAM

April

Theme: *The World of Nature*

The several topics which follow are to be assigned to different teachers and the aim of this meeting will be to enrich the observation and personal experiences of the teachers, rather than to provide material to be used directly with the children, although the latter will probably grow out of the discussion.

I. What do Children see in the World About Them?

(Tell the things which children you know have said about the creatures, trees and flowers that you have observed them investigating with interest; and the questions that children ask about these things.) We so often laugh at their quaint sayings that we miss the eternal truths underlying them. The eyes of little children are nearer the ground than ours and so they can quite easily see the little things that are growing and living. Bird notes are fresher to their ears than ours, and so many sights that have become familiar to us are new and amazing to them.

II. The Things I Do Not See

Have some teacher to whom this topic has been assigned in advance tell of the things and happenings in the world of nature that she is inclined to overlook because of their familiarity or her preoccupation.

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III. The World of Nature and Religious Teaching

(These topics may either be used as a basis for a talk by one of the teachers or for discussion by the whole group.)

What place has nature in the church-school program and teaching?

Is it nature study or appreciation that we wish to cultivate?

Can we be irreverent in God's world any more than in his house?

Is there any time or place quite so favorable for creating reverence for God's world as the hour of the children's worship in the church?

What was Jesus' attitude toward the world of nature?

Have we not a record of his interpreting the book of nature to the people more often than the Book of the Law?

IV. Nature Study for the Busy Teacher

Ask yourself this question, "What do I really know about the trees and flowers of my own community?" It is quite possible for the older Primary girls and boys to be better informed in some of these matters than their teachers. While they still have a profound respect for the wisdom and powers of grown people, they are often quite astonished by the number of things that these same adults do not know. The literature that has grown up as the result of the popularity of nature study is very rich and it is a

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question of choosing. At this season of the year there are at least two brief articles which every teacher could read with great profit: "The Return of the Birds," in *Wake Robin*, and "The Spring Birds' Procession," in *Field and Study*, both by John Burroughs. (The one who presents this topic should discover what nature books are available in the local library or can be secured from other sources. If at least one of the articles suggested is read and a brief review of it given at this time, it will be very helpful.)

V. The Children's Bird Book

It is a delightful plan to make a scrap-book of heavy gray paper pages at least 5 by 8 inches, with a brown or deep-blue cover to remind one of the earth or the sky, and to place in this the colored pictures of birds. These can be secured at a very moderate price from the Brown Picture Co., Beverly, Mass. A list can be secured from them and a selection made of the pictures and birds which appear in your community. Cut these out and paste upon the left-hand pages of the scrap-book. Upon the other page will be recorded the things which the children observe about the birds or what they do for them. This book can be made at the time of this meeting or prepared and brought in at this time. It should be used in the pre-session period. It is well to have a special table upon which it is kept and near the teacher, who is always in readiness to record the interesting items

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which the children report to her before the session. In one department where this plan was followed during several months of the spring, a small boy said one day in a burst of enthusiasm, "Well, this is just like a telephone book for birds!" Each pair of birds that arrived and built their nests near the homes of the children had been reported.

VI. A Spring Party

The children may meet at the church some afternoon after school and on Saturday and have a good time together "just because it is spring again." They may make attractive little messages for the members of the Home Department or the children's mothers. These can be made by cutting out pictures of birds or coloring jonquils which have been drawn in outline for them. Such Bible verses as "The time of the singing of birds has come," or "He hath made everything beautiful in its time," may be written on small folders of white paper ready for the children to insert in the book covers they make and tie with cord or ribbon. Cookies cut out with a flower design could be part of the refreshments and the old-fashioned games that are always appropriate at any season of the year may be played. The story, "The Little Boy Who Discovered Spring," is very appropriate. It is by Raymond M. Alden and may be found in his *Why the Chimes Rang*, or in *Stories Children Need*, by Bailey.

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FOURTEENTH PROGRAM

May

Theme: *The Teacher's Work on Sunday*

I. Quotations

(To be given in advance to certain teachers who will read them as an introduction to the theme of this meeting.)

Two great things:— to have the child come to school with all the experiences he has got outside — and leave it with something to be used in his life — Prof. John Dewey, *The School and Society*.

All is shifting day by day —
Worse or better, who can say?
Much we lose and much we learn,
But the children still return
As the flowers do, every year;
Just as innocent and dear
As those babies who did meet
At the heavenly Master's feet.
In his arms he took them all.
Oh, 'tis precious to recall —
Blessed to believe it true —
That what we love, he loved too!

— Francesca Alexander, *The Hidden Servants*.¹

Meet the child on a childlike plane of achievement, to acknowledge the day's accomplishments and, without disheartening him or even talking to him about the better things he will do, keep our own faces turned toward the morrow. — Angela Keyes, *Stories and Story Telling*.

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II. Prayer

That the task of teaching children may never seem common or unimportant.

Questions for Discussion

1. What should the teacher do before the session?

Discuss the readiness to hear childish confidences; plans for pre-session work; the opportunity for storytelling by both teacher and pupils.

2. What should the teacher do during the department program?

Discuss participation in prayer and song; the power of example; the confusion caused by teachers moving about the room during the opening program; the reasons for having the teacher seated with her class.

3. What is the best time for the lesson period — early in the hour, or after the general opening program?

4. How long should the lesson period be?

5. Which is better — a continuous thirty-minute period, or two periods of fifteen minutes each, with a department assembly between?

6. Should the teacher mark the pupils' records, or should this be done by a secretary in advance?

Discuss the relative advantages of the two plans — the former giving the teacher information concerning what the pupils are doing, and the latter giving her additional time to be used for other purposes.

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7. What is a logical lesson plan?

Give these in outline such as the following:

Expression (10 minutes)

New story (10 minutes)

Suggestions for home work (5 minutes)

8. If the story comes too early in the lesson period what is apt to occur?

9. To what extent may the teacher plan the expression period, allowing for the exercise of originality by the pupils and the needs of the particular occasion?

Discuss forms of expression, such as re-telling stories, relating experiences, recalling memory verses and handwork.

10. If the children are asked to re-tell a story immediately after they have heard it or to express it in any other way, is their expression likely to be valuable?

In this connection it may be interesting to know what Angela Keyes has said on this subject: "The tendency of teachers to require immediate reproduction is unwise utilitarianism and develops shallow glibness. It (the story) must be given time to root and flower."

11. What is the best way to recall memory verses?

Discuss the relative value of recalling a verse in connection with the letter of the alphabet with which it begins, or in connection with a life experience which it suggests.

12. Which is better — handwork in which the child merely cuts out, fills in or colors an outline given

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him, or a form which permits freedom of choice and expression?

13. What is the best way to make the transition from the period of expression to the new story?

Discuss the wisdom of always attempting to make a connection between the two. Is it not better sometimes to leave the former entirely, and begin the new story with simplicity and directness?

14. How long should the story be in point of time?

15. What are some of our most common mistakes in story-telling?

Discuss the misunderstandings which arise through our use of ideas, figures of speech and words which the children do not understand. Be frank in giving some examples of these — not for their drollness, but for the truth they reveal.

16. What is the best way to close this period?

This is the point at which the teacher needs skill and a light touch. Further comment on her part is apt to be an anti-climax, but a comment by a child may be very illuminating.

17. When is the best time to give out the lesson papers and how may this be done?

IV. Children's Day

In most churches a day early in the summer is called Children's Day and is set aside for them. The following matters relating to it might be discussed with profit:

1. If it is their day, what should it mean to them?

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2. What have you in songs, stories and Scripture verses that might be appropriately used on this occasion?

3. If anything new is to be used, how may it be included in your regular program, so that the children may become familiar with the songs and other things in a normal way, without feeling that they are merely getting ready to do something in public?

FIFTEENTH PROGRAM

May

Theme: *Summer Plans*

I. Quotation

Dear Master of the Garden, unto thee
I bring the blossoms, tended by my care;
I pray thee to receive them tenderly,
And find them fair.

These many days have I with longing eyes
Waited and watched for seed long sown to spring,
Eager to see (oh, heart grown strangely wise!)
Its blossoming.

So graciously and softly fell the dew
Of blessed promise on the precious seed,
As if the Lord of Harvests saw and knew
Its daily need.

Until, at last, in radiant life and light,
To fragrant bud and bloom I saw it spring.
I pray thee, guard from hurtfulness of blight
Its blossoming.

Dear Master of the Garden, unto thee
I bring these sweet child-flowers with a prayer:
Lord Christ, wilt thou receive them tenderly,
And find them fair!

— Marion Bernice Craig.

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II. The Room

How may a department room be made summer-like and attractive? In one department fresh white curtains were placed at the windows, and a simple cut-out border of wild roses put at the top of the burlap frieze around the room. All of the pictures except one large framed one were put away, and two or three, cut from the covers of summer magazines, were mounted and put up. In another room which had uncolored glass windows, flowers and leaves cut from crêpe paper were mounted as a transparency on the lower part of the windows, and gave the effect of flower beds in bloom. There should be "artistic restraint" in summer decorations, but you should plan together to make the environment pleasant and suitable for the season.

III. Classes

You may wish to plan for the combination of classes during July and August. If your two departments must meet in one room, perhaps you will have only one class for each; or, in some cases, all of the children may be in one large circle. This seems, indeed, like a happy family with big brothers and sisters, little children and helpful grown people. Discover the vacation plans of the teachers, so that you can arrange a schedule showing when the various teachers and officers can be present to share in the work.

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IV. The Program

Make it a happy, worth-while time for the children who will remain at home during the summer. Such a happy song and exercise as "The Waking of the Flowers" (*Songs for Little People*) will be a source of delight to the children. It can be modified to suit various circumstances, and could be the one new song which you will attempt during the summer season. Discuss your program, perhaps planning to make it entirely different from anything you have done before.

V. The Children Who Go Away

Ask each teacher to find out from the parents just when the different children will be away. Do not feel that they are no longer a part of your class, and that you are not responsible for them because they are away on vacation. It is a poor teacher who cannot extend her influence beyond actual personal contact. Any one of the following plans may be used, and perhaps all of them will be needed to meet the different circumstances:

Offer to provide the mother with a copy of the teacher's book, or at least an outline of the lesson. These may be secured from your denominational publisher. The mother who really wishes to co-operate in the religious education of her child will be glad of this opportunity to be his teacher.

Make up a set of the papers for the time that the child is to be absent, either putting these in the usual

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seasonal book covers, or giving them to the mother, who will in turn give them to the child each week.

Plan for each teacher to talk with the children about the summer plans, strengthening their loyalty to their church school, and helping them to feel that they are going out into God's big world, and perhaps will see wonderful things that they can come back and tell.

VI. The Teacher's Summer Plans

What are you planning to do this summer that will make you a better teacher? Everybody needs a change occasionally, and perhaps it would be a good thing for you to be away from your class and other work for a little while. Plan to do at least one of the following things during the summer:

1. Visit other schools.
2. Come a bit nearer to God's Word by reading the Bible not as a teacher preparing a lesson, but as one of his children who wishes to know him better.
3. Find out something new about God's world, if it is nothing more than to watch a bird family or the succession of wild flowers.
4. Attend a Summer School, if possible, and add to your knowledge concerning your work.
5. Read a book that will help you as a teacher.

VII. A Look Toward Autumn

Decide the date, approximately, of the next meeting, which should be not later than the first of Septem-

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ber. Perhaps you can plan to go together to the woods or park with your suppers some evening before the first Sunday in September. Let the fellowship of these conferences carry over into your hours of separation and the plans for the new year.



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